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Publiqu Amusement for Poor and Rich.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CHURCH OF THE UNITY,

WORCESTER,

DECEMBER 16, 1855.

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AT THE WARREN STREET CHAPEL, BOSTON, APRIL 29, 1857, AND BEFORE
THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN UNION, MAY 21, 1857.

It is the duty of the State and of the Church to provide Public Amusement.

BY EDWARD E. HALE.

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THE substance of this Address was prepared as a sermon, and read to my own people, at Worcester. Some illustrations have since been added, as I have been requested to repeat it before other audiences. I welcome so gladly the general attention called to the whole subject of Public Entertainment, by Dr. Bellows's very vigorous, careful, and, as I think, triumphant discussion of it, that I am glad to contribute, for such consideration as they deserve, these studies, however incomplete, of one or two points of view in it. So long as we live in the country, the subject does not come up for discussion, for there God provides the best entertainment for everybody. Every boy can find it in the trout streams, and every girl among the buttercups. But when we choose to bring people into crowded towns, to substitute pavement for the meadows, and mains six feet under ground for the trout-brooks, we must substitute something for the relaxation and amusement which we have taken away.

I print this address nearly in the language in which I last delivered it.

EDWARD E. HALE.

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, }
Boston, May 22, 1857. }

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DISCOURSE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I have the honor to read you a Lecture on PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

I do not select my subject. I attempt to treat it at the request of the officers of this Society, who have asked me to read here some suggestions on this subject which I had offered elsewhere. I ought to add, that they knew very well, therefore, how little I knew of my theme; that I had confessed, openly, my ignorance. For I said then, that I considered the great question regarding Public Amusements, as the most difficult of all questions; and that I knew less about them than I knew of any question of public administration. That is true. I have studied these questions more than I ever studied any question of social life. But I have not advanced much farther than that easy position, which finds out that a great deal is wrong,—and which says, with a sort of stupid fatuity, that somebody ought to appear and set it right. I have been hoping, since I was a boy, that some man would arise, of power more than Howard's, to do a greater work than Howard's, in shewing poor, haggard New England, how to amuse herself. He has never come, and she does not know how. You see, every year, throngs of people who have come into town to spend "Independence day," sadly pacing hand in hand up the streets and down again, unamused, unrejoicing,—wishing that the holiday were over, before it has half gone by. I have wished that some man of intellectual power as severe as Goethe's, and with the heart which that man-devil wanted, would appear, to shew our hard-workers how to rest themselves,—our hard-thinkers how to play. That man has never come, and those workers do not know. I do not profess, to-night, even

to begin upon his work. I shall do little more than shew you how much we need him, in the hope that when he does come, we may be more willing to welcome him, more willing to hear.

I begin by claiming a position which is not universally conceded. I must begin by saying dogmatically, what I do not condescend to prove, that, in its place, *Rest* is just as much a necessity of life as *Work* is. In the face of the popular theory, which supposes that work is in itself respectable, unless it is proved to be wrong ; and that rest, in itself, suspicious,—that it must prove itself to be in the right ; in the face of this popular theory, which is the theory of spelling-books, of careless talk, and of untrained consciences,—I must remind you, that WORK and REST have, each, its own place, and that neither must step beyond that place. In its right place and proportion, rest is as dignified, as creditable, as work is. God is not pleased with heads throbbing, or hands trembling, because they have overwrought in his service. Does some eager child of his break down the body which he has endowed, by labor unamused, God is not honored any more by the nervous suffering of that votary, than he is when the Hindoo worshipper tortures himself with stripes or wounds. God is not honored more by the slow suicide, than by the momentary sacrifice, when some fanatic flings himself beneath the idol's wheels. I call things by their names. When a fervent young student chooses to crowd into one day the work of three,—into a winter the work of years, and dies broken beneath the task,—I do not call that misfortune,—I call it suicide. None the less do I call it so, when I find his life published among tracts for young Christians, and his death spoken of as a “mysterious Providence.” And if this have not been his fault, or his choice alone ; if teachers have stood by and encouraged him to the effort, I charge them—not with “misdirected zeal”—but with “murder.” True, they may not have selected his particular life, with the intent to destroy it ; but that is no defence at law. If they have voluntarily tried the system, they have accepted the consequences also. For if, in trying a Colt's pistol, I should fire it now among you, with fatal effect upon somebody, it would be no defence for me, on my trial, that I had no particular intent of killing a particular individual ; that I bore him no malice, personally ; that I was

only trying a curious experiment. I should be guilty of murder. And that teacher is guilty of murder, though the malice is not personal malice, but what is called, at law, "malice against the whole world."

Such are the crimes of which they are guilty who choose to work without rest or recreation, or to make others work so. I say rest, or recreation, because recreation or amusement are but other names for rest. Such is the place which the hours of rest hold, in the subdivision of our time,—in our arrangements for it. I stand upon this ground, in claiming for Public Amusements the most careful attention and the best direction.

It is no adequate answer to the claim I thus make, to say that home entertainments and home amusements can be made to give all the rest, and relaxation, and recreation that is needed. I will not reply in an argument to this statement, because you know it is not true. We often hear it; we never believe it. The serious man who makes it, does not himself believe that one of Whitefield's Sermons read at home, aloud, to a family, will affect them in the same way as the same sermon would affect them, delivered by Whitefield, they sitting in a crowded congregation. No more is it possible to persuade yourself that the rendering of a symphony of Beethoven, by the poor, thin piano, which just hints at its harmonies and its contrasts of effort and repose, takes the place of the rendering of the same symphony by an orchestra of a hundred instruments, in presence of thousands of people. Nor is it any more possible to persuade yourself that Much Ado About Nothing, well read aloud, by a quiet gentleman or lady, sitting by the fire, amuses you, rests you, as completely, as fully, or satisfies you as entirely as the same play, if you could only have it well performed by a number of gentlemen or ladies, where you had the contagious sympathy of a large number of hearers. Of other public amusements, even the pretence of a home substitute does not exist. You cannot have an exhibition of pictures, at all, unless numbers contribute to bear the expense. You cannot hear the Creation performed, or the Messiah, unless you go together to hear the performance. And, indeed, in the union, is great part of the enjoyment. You hear lectures, where you are all together, which you would never think of reading in the

newspaper. You laugh at the juggler, when you are in a crowd ; you would never sit down to see him play his tricks to you alone.

Of this point I shall have to speak again. The simple fact is, that it is only the rich, the educated, who can supply, in their own homes, the necessity for entertainment, which, for the poor and the ignorant, are supplied by Public Amusements alone.

When the man shall appear who shall solve this problem for us, when he shall teach us how to amuse this people of ours innocently, I say, he will be the greatest benefactor of New England. He is the man whom most she needs.

For *First*. The strange question of the health of our over-worked people, demands for its solution a reply to the question how they shall be entertained.

Second. All this complicated labor question, the discussion of ten hours' systems, of the work of women, of the work of children, asks what men, women and children are to do with the hours of rest.

Third. Our whole Temperance question brings up the same question as a part of it. Will you shut up from the day laborer the comfortable saloon, where is light, warmth, and such society, at least, as he likes ; and send him to his cold, dark, perhaps lonely home, without any provision for these long evenings ? What would one of these evenings be to you, if you did not know how to read, and had no one to talk to ?

Fourth. The question of the courage of a people, shut up in towns, and unused to meet danger,—the question whether you and your children shall grow up cowards or no,—is only to be solved by a right understanding of athletic amusements.

Fifth. And comprehending all these : Every question of religion demands an answer, which shall show whether the Puritans were right in thinking God insulted when his children are amused. Till we decide that, we do not know how to convert the world.

I say I have studied this question more than I have even studied any question of social administration. I am also willing to confess that I know less of it than of any ; that it seems to me the most difficult of all. I venture with

confidence, however, thus far to say, that I think, in our management of it, our leading principle has been wrong.

I. That is to say,—with some rare exceptions, the community acts on the old Puritan principle, which considered all amusement as, in itself, worldly, and so wrong.

We act, in these matters, as if the burden of proof were against every public entertainment. Each one must work its way against the steady inertia of a public conscience, which, without much thought, pronounces favorably, as a matter of course, of the man who never is seen in public places of any sort, but always spends his evenings at home. Our public authorities look at entertainments, and the public law bids them do so, only to arrest what is bad: almost never, to introduce what is good. The church does the same thing; points out the dangers of the theatre, the frivolity of cards, and the temptations of dancing, and there stops,—satisfied if it have arrested evil, and forgetting that the gospel way to arrest evil is to drive out evil with good. There is many a tract published by one and another society, on the dangers of gambling; but not one on the advantages of playing cricket. Many a sermon warns you to stay away from the theatre, but you hardly ever heard one which advises you to go and hear “The Creation,” or “Elijah.”

I say all this is the result of a false principle. It is the result of the old error which supposed the universe a failure, and this world under the empire of the devil, and the church a little handful which had escaped the wreck of all beside and around. The same principle has in turn stamped astronomy as a vain prying into mystery; botany a waste of time; and gardening frivolous folly. Supposing that the kingdom of heaven was not at hand, but at a distance, the Puritan fathers wished that men should mortify the flesh, abjure the present, see no beauty in stones, none in flowers, none in stars: and, by the same rule, none in pictures, none in dancing, none in music. To sacrifice all this for the service of God, is, on that hypothesis, one of the gallant offerings of self-denial which one makes to his Maker’s glory!

Now, in reality, every wing of the church has abandoned that theology. As matter of theory, it is not sustained anywhere. And yet the practice based upon it lingers in our habits and in our legislation. If, however, I do reject that theory, if I believe God never abandoned the world, if I

believe that the Christian system is the explanation, illustration, elucidation of the system of natural religion, and not a contradiction to it, not its overthrow, then it will become my business to see, not only that my soul aspires to God, but that every power that he gave my body is fully trained, and that every delicate sense and faculty of mind shall have fair exercise. If I hold this theology, I must educate the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, as Paul puts it, that man may be presented before God a perfect creature ; while the Puritan theology was justified, on its premises, in trying to educate the soul alone, and in mortifying body and mind together. If I hold that God intended everything, unabused, to work good, then the passion of Rachel, if unabused, or the dancing of Fanny Ellsler, if unabused, or the singing of Jenny Lind, if unabused, all assume the position of remarkable successes in the development of faculties he has implanted. They deserve attention in their way, as Chrysostom's preaching did, in its way, or as Jeremy Taylor's devotion. While it is perfectly true that, on the hypothesis of our ancestors, all three of these are temptations of the devil seeking to call man from his knees, trying to bring back to earth the soul entranced in heaven, and they are all to be stigmatized together.

Thus much for the false principle from which spring our failures. As for the detail of our failures, let us see what has been the result of our practice. As I was preparing this lecture for delivery last autumn, I saw, one day, the by-streets placarded with notices of "RARE SPORT FOR EVERYBODY." My mind was occupied with that exact question, the most difficult of all, which asks, How shall we amuse everybody, rich and poor, learned and simple ? I thought I had caught a clew. I approached the nearest placard, to read the small letters with the large, and found that the "sport for everybody" was an announcement that, at such an hour, at such a place, the celebrated terrier, *Mad Jack*, would be put to his task of killing one hundred rats in five minutes ; and that opportunities would be given for other rats to be killed by other terriers. Such are the classical amusements which slip in, in the midst of the public conviction, that the provision for amusement may be safely left to individual enterprise alone, and that the public authorities must not sully their hands with it. In the same conviction, the drama takes the myste-

ries of Boston, the adventures of Jack Sheppard, or the death struggles of Camille, for its share. And the Lyceum, not knowing exactly whether it is expected to amuse or to instruct, falls between two stools, instructs very little, and amuses even less. So a sad public returns next morning to its filing of iron, its balancing of accounts, its sewing of seams, or its digging of mud, without one wrinkle smoothed, without one care lightened. The killing of rats has not soothed it; the death-rattle of Camille hath not soothed it; and the lecture certainly has not rested it. The evening has been killed, and that is all.

Now, in all these cases, the gospel way would be, "to overcome evil with good." But, by refusing to put our hands to the good, the evil comes in in spite of us. When we do undertake the good, we do it so timidly as to gain nothing at all. We see only a repetition of just what happens in our literature from kindred causes. What a wretched failure is poetry, when it offers you instruction and entertainment together! While true poetry, as Goethe says, frees us by its inward serenity and outward graces, indifferent poetry, as the Didactic Moral Poems, exhibit a gloomy dissatisfaction with life. It may be questioned whether, if some of the moral poems built in imitation of Young's Night Thoughts, were carried out to their legitimate result, that gloomy morality would not result in suicide! So tenacious, however, is our habit of trying to mix our play and our money-getting, that if a bold parish announces a tea-party, it has to explain apologetically at once that the tea-party has an *object*; it is not mere entertainment, oh, no! it is to provide a carpet for the vestry, or shoes for the poor! If you see a handbill announcing a *festival*, you know the festival is going to grind out money for somebody. And the enthusiasm of an old countryman, who is told there is to be a *fair*, is chilled when he finds that the fair is *of use* too, it is only a parody on a subscription paper, that the very gods of laughter are chained to the mill-stone, that it is a grave and virtuous fair, with no fiddle, no dancing, no puppet-show,—indeed, very little fun at all.

II. This is all I will say, either on the principle to which our failures are due, or on their details. Let us look farther, at their possible remedy.

We believe the Puritan theory false. We believe that God wants the education of the whole man,—body, mind, and soul,—that to God's eye, therefore, the hours of rest are worth as much as the hours of labor, and that he means to provide amusement for his children as much as toil. In fact, however, we know that, as they are, this amusement or recreation is not to be found wholly in their own homes. I suppose that, for you and me, reading is undoubtedly our chief amusement. But will you remember, not only those who cannot read, but, beside them, the large numbers of those who do not read well enough to enjoy. Ask at the bookstores, if half the people of this town ever carry home a book of any sort at all. No, they do not. Because more than half the people of this town read with so much difficulty, that reading is a toil,—at most, a convenience,—but no pleasure. Yet, what other home amusement does John Shay have, who has been setting horses' shoes all day; or Dennis Maher, who has been at work in water to his knees? You do not want him to play cards. He does not want, after a day's work, to go play ten-pins for three or four hours more. He wants, and you want for him, sympathy,—which is society,—and amusement, which is rest; social entertainment, public amusement. I do not doubt that you, who, behind your counter, or in the bank, or on the railroad, or in court, have talked with a hundred people to-day, are best entertained, and most profitably occupied alone with an agreeable book at home. But for him, or for his wife, who have not spoken twenty words to-day, nor heard words, except as commands, I am quite sure it is the other way.

Now, those whose business it is to undertake this provision, from selfish motives, do one of two things:

They provide what are called the respectable, or what are called the disreputable amusements. That is, they either provide for those classes who can do very well without, because they pay the best; or

They provide what is vicious and depraved, because, to vulgar tastes and low, vice is more popular than virtue. At least, this is the tendency. And, because this is the tendency, it seems to me the business of *the public*, in some of its many organizations, to attend, not only to the restricting of bad public amusements, but to the providing of good ones. The churches might attend to this without soiling their purity.

Lyceums might attend to it openly, instead of pretending to teach people, as they do. Temperance societies might attend to it. Or the civil government itself might attend to it, with just the same justification which it has for attending to public education in other forms. For myself, I believe that this last is the result we shall eventually arrive at, and ought to arrive at. As it stands, the authorities occasionally refuse a license for an exhibition of naked women, or when a father wishes to exhibit his child feeding a poisonous snake. Once a year they provide an entertainment of fire-works, and sometimes a regatta upon the water, and then shrink back in terror from the experiment. Twice a week in summer, a band plays upon the common. And this is all. I say this of Boston. In the rest of the Commonwealth, the Public's provision for the entertainment of the people, is restricted to the ringing the bells in the churches for the hour between four and five on the morning of the Fourth of July. And all of these are acknowledged to be exceptions to our general policy. Speaking in general, I should have a right to say, that the public action regarding amusements, is confined to restrictions upon them—restrictions too, imposed only in extreme cases.

I think they were more right in Athens, where the government always took the position of the father of a family, who "chooses to know where his children are." An important branch in administration, was the providing of entertainment, watching over it that it should come up to their standard of rights; and then providing, for each of the people, the means to buy his ticket for the entertainment. This was in a state which did not provide the means of religious instruction, which did not attempt the education of its people. But on just the grounds that we do provide these, it did provide the entertainment of them all. And it kept its eye on them the whole time. I doubt if we shall secure the elevation of our public entertainments to our best standards, till we do the same thing.

I know it will be long before the public understand this, for public opinion is but the average of individual opinion; and in this matter a great many excellent men and women are so panic-struck that they have no opinion at all. But I had just as lief tell what I should be glad to see done, though I know it will be long before we shall have it done. For one instance, I will take what is called the most difficult of

all the detailed questions regarding the amusement of the public: this question of the theatre. People are apt to talk about this as if it were a peculiar question, separated from most others of public administration, and to be decided on different principles. I do not believe it is. I believe its dangers are governed by the same laws which govern all other dangers, and its successes by the same laws which govern all other victories. And I believe, therefore, that the practical results of a theatre, in any town, or in any time, will be just as high as the motive which establishes that theatre and manages it—no higher and no lower. If, then, your theatre be established, as alas, it is almost always, merely with the desire of making a profit out of the necessity of recreation, which is felt by every faithful child of God, the results of your theatre will be as mean as your motive. Or if, again, you establish it merely to gratify certain senses of your ear or your eye,—to gratify yourselves, in a word; if some particular “upper ten thousand,” create it for *themselves*, careless of that lowest ten thousand, which needs relaxation a hundred times as much as you do, again your motive is of the devil, and the results are accordingly. But when I have said this, I have simply said that the fountain cannot rise higher than its source; that that which is of the flesh is flesh, and, like all flesh, dies. I have only said what I might say of the Senate, of the Council Chamber,—that, when a man or a party uses these institutions merely for personal profit, or for selfish gain, they are, for all their high names, as mean as the most worthless of human creations. I have said that which I need not say of the church, because it has been said, by inspired lips before me, that he who works in the church for the selfish motive of a Simon Magus, perishes with his money. The church, which sells its indulgences, dies with the touch of the cursed coin. The preacher, who preaches for applause or for pay, never lifts a human soul higher than the motive from which he himself is working. The institutions of religion have no power, more than the institutions of amusement, to work results finer than the motive power brought to bear. In point of fact, I conceive that all history shows that the moment the Christian men of a community, in the course of their arrangements for that community, take hold of the drama, and consecrate it to their aims, the moment they dare ask God’s blessing upon it in prayer, that moment it is as

innocent as any other engine which they employ. *Till* it is under such control, its purity, even its harmlessness, is almost the accident of an accident. When it is under such control, it obeys the law of every institution; its results have God's blessing, and spring as high as the motives from which they flow.

But you are saying that this is very easy to say, but that it is all imaginary; that no such control of the drama has been attempted since, in the middle ages, the Catholic priests exhibited to a barbarous peasantry, their visible representations of the Scripture History. I beg your pardon. There is scarcely one of our older country academies, in our smallest towns, which, at its annual exhibition, does not present a play, acted by the pupils, in the presence of the ministers, the deacons, the church members, the whole community. Nobody is afraid, in such a place, that the morals of the town will be corrupted by "Box and Cox" thus presented, and why? Simply because somebody of character is responsible. It is somebody's fault, if the exhibition, however indirectly, introduces a shade of evil thought or of temptation. The instance is a little one, but it embodies the whole principle. The whole principle is involved, where, with courage for which I give them all credit, the young gentlemen of one of your Orthodox churches, play "Still Waters Run Deep," in the vestry, in the presence of their minister, and their other friends. What you can do on a small scale, you can do on a large scale. Let a city government appoint a committee on public amusement as distinctly responsible for the theatre, the opera, public concerts, shilling dances, and assemblies for rat-catching, as the school committee is responsible for the schools; a committee as responsible and as powerful. Let the law of the State take that ground, that the public ought to provide public entertainment and oversee it, just as it provides public education and oversees it, and all our great questions, as we call them, about the influence of dancing, and the influence of music, and the influence of the drama in such things, would become very little questions of detail. Let us take the ground as to public entertainment, that it is not enough to restrict here and to restrict there, but that the public must be answerable for it, all along. If, whenever there was a vicious play at your higher or your obscurer theatres, a common council-

man and an alderman were impeached for it, and put out of office, I should have little fear but the drama would flow pure.

This is what we could wish for. That the government would take all this in charge. It will be long before that, however. A great many failures will be necessary, springing from the want of such action, and a great many partial successes of those who work less efficiently, before the law, and the local governments acting under the law, will reverse the action which has grown up under the old Puritan theory. I think no one now believes in the theory, but as often happens, the practice lives long after the theory is dead. What you and I can do in this matter, must be done by more modest agencies. Let us hope that it may be efficient enough to point the way to systematic success.

III. Bear in mind, then, what we do. We are to announce, in a practical way, that one class of people has as good right to some cheerfulness as another ; the honest poor, as the honest rich. We attempt to provide food for the latent faculties which God has scattered, as he scatters rain and snow, everywhere. Has he a child, even in abject poverty, who is eagerly fond of music ? We mean he shall hear it. Is there another born to be an artist ? We mean he shall know what a painting is, or a statue ; God's love shall not be lost, because we have no love at all. Of ways in which we may secure the first of these aims, an excellent single illustration is in the success of any of the Christmas trees last winter, in which, I dare say, many of you shared. Such an experiment required the energetic work for a few days of a few hearty people, and the Christmas contributions of a few. I do not believe you ever expend money or time better for the poor. To give one merry evening to a hall full of children, so unused to the entertainments of your own children, that some of them did not know what cake was when they saw it ; and to associate that entertainment with the memory of their Savior, was itself an immense success. If, at the same time, it revealed a novelty to us in showing that many of these children were semi-savages, the revelation was worth making to those who live within sight of the smoke of those savages' lodges. When Amos Lawrence met the groups of boys cheering their more fortunate companions,

who had clubbed their spending money for a sleigh-ride,—when he provided a sleigh for those who could not provide for themselves, he gave us another such illustration. Walk through Ann street in summer, with a basket of cut flowers. Give one to each child who runs up and looks wistfully, or asks respectfully for “a posy.” They will not last but a minute, but as you go home empty-handed, you may contrast against your own life, the life where children never see these gifts of God,—unless they peep through your fence to see them,—gifts which are part of the public entertainment once given to all of you,—but which, as fast as we make building-lots of the pastures and wood-lots, we take away from them.

There are few of our large manufacturers, or manufacturing companies, who might not take pattern from some of the large English workshops. In them this question makes itself felt, as it does here. The Messrs. Spottiswoode,—the Queen’s printers in London, have found this solution. Highly trained gentlemen,—with the laurels of Cambridge, and the immense resources at command of their immense monopoly,—they find their truest way to do their duty by their men, is to live at their Printing House,—take Apprentices into their own home,—and watch over them as over their younger brothers. Into such a life morning prayer comes in, not as a form, but as a reality. And an excursion on foot for a week or two in summer, in which men and employers share, is a pleasure, I doubt not as great to the masters as to their workmen. At the annual meetings of the shareholders in Price’s Candle Works, one of the greatest manufactories of London,—with the manager’s report, and the treasurer’s, there is made every year the chaplain’s report, on the moral and intellectual training of the men. And this devoted man,* whose occupation shows that there is one corporation not without a soul,—reports not only on the number of boys at school, or the number of men at lecture,—but on the cricket matches which the boys’ classes played against the men’s,—and the conditions by which he regulated their trials. I did not wonder, when I saw, in a private letter, a few days since, a hopeful and earnest account of a revival of religion among those men and boys. For I knew that they would believe him the more implicitly, and respect him the more

* Rev. J. K. Wilson.

truly, because they had seen him in other places than in the school-room. No loss of influence to him if they had seen him before a wicket, bat in hand!

Of such efforts, I think the most remarkable of which the last few years have given us account, is that which resulted in the Liverpool cheap concerts. A nuisance had grown up in Liverpool, which is creeping into our large towns, what I may call drinking concerts ;—or musical liquor shops. Connected with some tavern is a hall,—where musicians perform, and those who attend to hear the music are at liberty to call for the nominal worth of their ticket in liquor, which, for the purposes of the occasion, is called refreshment. If you have been too fortunate to see such places, you will remember descriptions of them in Dickens's novel of *Bleak House*,—or in D'Israeli's of *Sybil*. A body of wise men and women, who saw the dangers of such union of taste and temptation, undertook to drive out evil with good. They organized and were responsible for, *Monster Concerts*,—where the music was a great deal cheaper than the liquor sellers', and a great deal better at the same time. They went on the principle that people would rather hear the good music than the poor, and they proved to be in the right. Evening after evening they brought three or four thousand people together, who paid three pence each for their admission. Three pence each gave about forty pounds an evening, say two hundred dollars. In such a cause this was enough to secure the services of the best musicians in England. And when Braham, and Bishop, and Grisi, and Sontag, sang at the cheap concerts, it was no wonder, if for the evening, the attractions of the liquor saloons paled before the programme offered by good feeling, wealth, and genius.

This was thirteen years ago. A friend in Liverpool has just now sent me this account of the present working of these concerts. "In several places in England," he writes, "large halls have been built, or are preparing, where such concerts can be thrown open for a trifling entrance fee. In such halls there is sometimes an orchestra, sometimes an organ ; oftener only a piano, or simply vocal music. Liverpool has preëminently distinguished herself in thus giving to all her citizens a high artistic pleasure. In her truly magnificent *Saint George's Hall*, during the last season, assemblies of three thousand people have, week after week, on Saturday evening,

listened to selections of pieces from the first masters, performed by an admirable organist, on an organ built especially for this hall, which is unsurpassed for richness, power, and variety. The entrance fee is usually three pence." The result of this is, of course, that all other entertainments of the same sort are obliged to arrange their prices to match. "During the week, concerts have been again and again given, where vocal and instrumental artists of great merit have presented a most varied entertainment, for the small sum of six pence or a shilling." Our specially popular concerts are given every Saturday evening in Concert Hall, where for thirteen years past, crowds of the working classes, always, so far as I have observed, decent in dress and decorous in manners, have assembled to listen for some two hours, to singing of various kinds necessarily of a popular character, yet very good. For instance, I observe an advertisement for this week, the following "Bill of Fare." "Youthful Illustrations, or the Evening Hour." "An English, Irish, Scotch, American, and French Vocal Entertainment, by the English and Hibernian Wonders, John and Marie, whose efforts have been so rapturously received by the metropolitan public, Birmingham, and the Provinces." I do not know how this may prove, but I can testify to having heard most excellent music most enthusiastically applauded at these concerts." I make no question as to the quality of the music, for there is a Committee of character to engage it, and three thousand three pences, or one hundred and eighty dollars to pay expenses. My friend continues: "The terms of admission are, three pence to the body of the hall, six pence for the side galleries, one shilling for reserved seats, and children half price to the galleries and reserved seats." An admirable part of this institution is the Singing Class, on Wednesday evening, where pupils are instructed in "Vocal Rudiments, a simple method of reading music at sight, Glees, Madrigals," for three pence. There are also French Classes, and a French Conversational Class, for which the admission fee is *three pence*; and finally, a News Room is open every day except Sunday, for one penny.

Think of a success like that, and then ask seriously, if our magnificent Music Hall were open, night after night, to all who would pay five cents to hear good popular music, would not the entertainment, pure, simple, undisguised entertainment, because a good entertainment, work perceptibly to drive bad entertainments from the town?

Does not such an instance as that show why God gave the love of music to rich and poor, wise and simple, saint and sinner together? Does it not show the power we have in our hands, if we accept the duty of entertaining people, that duty pure and simple,—without disguise, without equivocation? As it is, when we do provide public entertainment with care and system, it is for just those who could do very well without it. Take your success here, when in the hall up stairs, Mr. Thackeray called together three thousand people here. All who came could have provided for those evenings their own amusement. But you did not see there the people who have no comforts at home, whom a book does not entertain, and whose hard physical day's labor, needs more than any man's beside relaxation, light, and tender. Of course they did not go. Brilliant as the entertainment was, it would have been no entertainment to those who had not some preparation for it. Yet I can conceive that an unaffected ballad-singer, or a skilful performer of tricks of legerdemain, or a good band performing favorite airs, or a magic lantern with popular slides, or a good reader, advertising that he would read Charles O'Malley aloud, or Handy Andy, could have called in a couple of thousand of such persons, so that there should have been five hundred merry families that evening, and the next morning a thousand cheerful workmen, and not one complaint in the Police Court, of a noisy frolic the night before.

IV. These illustrations refer simply to the relaxation of the men and women who have been working all day. They do not pretend to instruct the people, nor directly to teach them morals; but simply to rest them and amuse them. The man who has been sawing wood all day, or he who has been taking notes in court all day, do not need instruction, but rest.

I come now to another class of public entertainments, almost unknown among us, which claim to give relaxation to those whose work has been head work, amusement, and bodily strength, together. The Puritan theory of religion swept these away with the others. To play at cricket, was a sin, in the eyes of the fathers, as much as to dance, or to play on an ungodly instrument. The result lingers to this day. Even our school-boys cannot play at most of the athletic games of the English schools; the traditions of cricket, ten-

nis, trap, and even leap-frog, have died out where tradition is strongest.* And to speak of men, I am afraid it would be thought a severe stain on business character, if it was whispered that a bank director, or a member of the board of aldermen, or a young lawyer, or a judge, were seen playing in a game of cricket, or joining in a rowing match of an afternoon. If they indulge in such levities at all, it must be before sunrise, or after sunset. Yet when a few months hence we hear that the young lawyer's cheek is hectic, or when we see that his eyes are heavy, we are willing enough to say that he worked too hard at his desk ; though we have kept tight the screws of public opinion, which prevent any man from playing except by stealth at all. And when it is too late, we send him to Cuba ; that, when it is too late, he may give the air and exercise to his poor dying lungs, which we have sedulously forbidden him before. In all this, too, we act also with a stupid inconsistency. I may dig in my garden, because there is a pretence of usefulness ; though the crop I raise is not worth a hundredth part of the money it cost me. But if I spent a tenth part of the same time in playing ball, or in skating, or in rowing, my reputation, as a man of industry, and even of sense, under our artificial canons, would be gone.

I must add, then, to the suggestions I have made, that, in our gradual work for the improvement of public amusement, we need to do more in the way of the athletic amusement of our people. There was no hazard in letting this alone either, in our old country life, for there the day's work gives the most manly exercise. Good training for body, mind, and soul, all together, does the country boy get, who is sent off alone into the woods for a winter day, to chop till night-fall, with his tin pail for his restorator, and his thoughts for his only companions. But when we coop ourselves up in towns, let us look to it in time, that the curse does not come on us, of cowardice settling down on hearts which are unused to lively adventure, and of physical weakness settling on bodies, which have been bred in greenhouse culture, without open air.

The country boy is trained to courage in the various adven-

*A few young men, who really deserve credit for courage in their undertaking, meet daily to play cricket on the Common. It is evident that the crowd of spectators look on with general curiosity upon the detail of the game. Most of them know as little of its rules, as of the games played in Sparta.

tures of field sports, of swimming, or of the woods. Where does the city boy gain courage, who studies somebody's fourth part all day at school, and in the evening, either hears a Lyceum lecture on the culture of the beautiful, or reads at home, (because he is a good boy, and does not want to go abroad,) in "Julia Clifford," or in "Minnie Myrtle," or in "Namby Pamby?" You do not yet see, young gentlemen, what all this leads to. For you recruit yourselves yet from the country, and in every summer's field sports, you make good your losses of the winter. But, how of the boy born here, whose foot never treads outside the town? I stopped just before the snow fell, last winter, to see some boys play football on the Common, and it made me heart-sick. The manly struggle, the fierce hard shock of body against body, over the doubtful ball, the impetuous charge of a fearless phalanx, the brilliant dash of some bold runner, reckless of everything but victory, gaining speed actually from will, flying over the ground, because he must, he knows not how, all this was gone. And the noble game, which should be the type of manly effort in life, had become a fiddling piece of finesse and stratagem; the competition of milksops, afraid they should be hurt; of grown up babies, who will never be men. And this is what we are gaining in our "intellectual culture." This is the real sequel to the Fourth Part of our patent double-refined progressive courses of Popular Education.

I would not allude to that, if it were an accident. It is not an accident. The tendency of city life is to make boys timid; to make them cowards. Athens knew this, and provided the Palæstra for them. Rome knew it, and provided the Campus Martius. London knew it once, and provided her Archers' Butts, her cricket grounds. She has forgot it now. We never have learned it here, but it is time we did. I believe every Cambridge man will own, that one of the best things he learned in college, if he went there from Boston, was the lesson of personal fearlessness which the country boys taught him upon the Delta, the college playground. A lesson that, which might be carried a great deal farther.

I say all this, of the timidity that grows upon crowded towns. As to the physical strength, or frame of men who weave silk, or file iron; of their children who are born in crowded courts and lanes, I need name, I think, but one

illustration. In thirty years, in the poorest quarters of London, the race of men so degenerated in *size*, that, at the end of the European war, St. Giles and Spitalfields ceased to furnish recruits for the army, because their men did not measure five feet two !

V. In the regulation, both of home amusements and public amusements, the double danger is apparent : first, that we neglect work for the fascinations of amusement ; or, second, that we neglect a just amusement for the fascinations of work. The second danger is as great with us as the first is. Of public amusements, there is this additional danger, that if we leave the provision for them merely to the selfishness of man ; to that wretched un-christian principle of the “let-alone,” which hopes the supply will, of itself, always meet the demand,—we run the risk that men will provide for the lower appetites and not the higher : will debase the taste and feeling of society, instead of striving to elevate it always and making it more pure. To escape this last danger, it is the duty of Christian men to take charge, from high motive, of this essential part of the public training, certain to be wrongly cared for when it is left too low. Where the best men, from the best motive, undertake the management of the people’s entertainment, the questions and doubts of to-day will one by one disappear. It will justify itself, it will escape criticism, just so far as it is in the hands of those who wish to train man to God, and so far only.

Three dangers, then, are there for us to avoid.

1. That public amusement be not left for man’s selfishness only to provide.
2. That, public or private, we do not neglect work for the fascination of play. And
3. That we never neglect play for the fascination of work.

Dangers so serious as these, there is nothing unworthy in the attempt to consider them, here, by a “Christian Union,” or a “Christian Church ;” nothing indecorous in asking of God the power which shall resist them. We have this world to subdue ; again let us say that, and always let us feel it. We must keep up the full working power of the race to subdue it. All together, we are only just enough, if our working power be at the full. God did not send one laborer too many into his harvest field. With the rising sun

we are all a-field, at work for God, or ought to be : to tame his elements,—the fire, the air, the water, to his service ; or to train his children ; or to compel the world of matter, that the world of man may come to God the closer. All of us are in that commission. He who sleeps after the morning call is given, rebels ; and he who wastes his power, and turns aside to play in the meadows, when he ought to thrust in the sickle, rebels. God wants all, and each has his present duty. But yet again,—he who staggers on, when the day's work is done, tries to gather to-day more than to-day's manna, rebels also. God wants a sound workman to-morrow ; not anybody who has borrowed in advance, to-day, the strength meant for to-morrow and for days to come. And for those who have done their duty to-day, God commands rest before to-morrow,—rest, light-hearted and real. Let those who care for the workmen when the hours of work are over, see that they provide relaxation worthy of him, cheerful, grateful, heavenly ; not disguised sermons, nor yet sugared information, nor yet sensual lust,—all which do but wear out the exhausted powers they affect to soothe.

We take a step towards this when we improve our public libraries ; when we provide for a Christmas tree ; when we entertain in any way a day school, or a Sunday school ; when the band plays upon the Common ; when we relax work a little, and grant a holiday. Let us feel that these steps are not exceptions, but only the beginning upon a great duty, yet scarcely apprehended. As God's world comes nearer to him and nearer, it is certain that we shall find it more cheerful, and not less ; more gay, not more stern. How wonderful will worship become, when worship is rendered by children of his, who feel that their joys also are sacred to him ! How wonderful this whole world, when it shall appear that health, and liveliness, and energy, belong to the pious, the devout, the godly ; not to the man of the world peculiarly,—and that religion is not the exclusive property of the downcast, the sick, or the dying. For the training of that world, the people must use the hours of leisure rightly, as well as the hours of labor. That every place may be a temple, requires that the place of amusement be consecrated. And we must bring the thought of God into the management of every man's recreations, as of his labors, if we mean that, in very truth, he shall rejoice evermore.